



SB906 - Conversion of Commercial Buildings for Residential Use - Report Hearing Date: February 29, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

To Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake **in favor of SB0906**. Our state is defined by the Chesapeake and Coastal bays waterways, which contribute to our economy, and are a centerpiece of our culture and traditions in Maryland. Waterkeepers Chesapeake, and the clean water advocates across the State signed below, work to protect and restore the unique tributaries of the Bay, and work with local counties to implement best practices for the benefit of our water quality.

The Chesapeake is impaired by nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and bacteria. After 40 years of pollution reduction efforts in the Chesapeake Bay region, our waterways and communities are still falling short of the envisioned restoration goals. Scientists who advise on state clean-up efforts recently completed a study to understand why. The Chesapeake Bay Program's [CESR Report](#)—A Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response— names non point source pollution as our last and largest hurdle to meeting our restoration goals. Urban stormwater is the fastest growing source of nonpoint source pollution in Maryland waterways, which could cause significant conflicts as the state grapples with solutions for the ongoing housing crisis. Requiring local planning programs to prioritize redevelopment for housing, whenever possible, is an important step to reduce sprawl, minimize stormwater impacts, and increase housing for community members across Maryland.

Our state is facing both a housing and a water quality crisis. The Moore-Miller Administration has stated a goal and introduced legislation to make Maryland more affordable, particularly in housing. At the same time, reports show that we are not on track to meet our 2024 water quality goals. Development is inextricably linked to water quality - increasing the pathways for stormwater runoff pollution by increasing impervious surfaces. **Senate Bill 906 takes an effective approach towards addressing both the housing and water quality issues our communities face.**

For these reasons stated above, we urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB0906**.

Sincerely,

Waterkeepers Chesapeake and clean water organizations signed below:

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Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

Annie Richards
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Sara Caldes
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